

Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions makes a swift transformation to digital with the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press



At a glance

Industry: Marketing Services Provider

Business name: Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions, Inc.

Headquarters: Alpharetta, Georgia, USA

Website: yourbenson.com



Integrated
Marketing
Solutions™

Challenge

- Improve productivity and cost-effectiveness while delivering high-quality marketing and sales materials that can be printed and shipped the same day.
- Eliminate bottlenecks and increase speed to market.
- Move from a complex mix of digital and conventional print production to fully digital, reduce touch points and simplify multiple work flows.

Solution

- Move to fully digital production with the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press.
- Use the power of the HP SmartStream Pro Print Server to maximise throughput with its fast RIP and Direct2Finish platform for automated near-line finishing.
- Integrate CIP4 standards and Job Definition Format (JDF) workflow with a Polar cutter via barcodes that ensure error-free cutting and optimise production efficiencies.
- Change the print production mind-set with a rapid shift to digital printing and the elimination of legacy conventional capacity.
- Reduce processes and 'touch points' by simplifying the workflow and streamlining production.

Results

- Delivers true automation through rapid adoption of digital printing with accelerated web-to-print production.
- Reduction of production times and costs through elimination of prepress and manual processes.
- Positive cash-flow and achievement of ROI targets from day one.
- Achievement of a more cost-effective service for customers and improved margins for Benson.

“What I like most about the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press is that it eliminates prepress and make-ready. It gives us a cleaner environment; great tracking and analysis tools and a simple, streamlined operational stream. It’s just easy.”

– Brian Benson, founder and CEO, Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions, Inc.



While most printers are described as ‘taking the step into digital production’, in the case of Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions, it was more like plunging into digital. Within two weeks of commissioning its HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press, the company decommissioned and sold its conventional presses; but then, Benson isn’t like most printers.

“What we do is supply our customers with complete marketing solutions from concept to delivery,” says Brian Benson, founder and CEO, Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions, Inc. “Printing is one of our tools to achieve that; an activity necessary to fulfil those requirements.”

Customer requests cover a broad range of activities and products ranging from business cards, folders and brochures to digital and permanent signage on a range of materials; branded career apparel and promotional products.

“Our customer base is comprised of national companies, from those with hundreds of locations to those with thousands,” Benson explains. “When we ship to a customer, it’s likely to contain 50 different SKUs, from name tags, to brochures, to door mats.

“One of our strengths is in procurement and delivering value from cost and time savings,” he says. “That ability and the advantages we can offer as a single-source supplier enabled us to grow throughout the recession. In the last five years, our revenues have grown more than 300 per cent.”

A contract business model

All of Benson’s work is done on a contractual basis from its Alpharetta, Georgia, facility where it employs 139 people, including a team of 14 designers.

“We work with companies to establish their needs for marketing and sales materials for the coming year,” Benson explains. “We don’t quote for specific jobs, but provide the complete solution. During the year, customers can order online, including web-to-print, and we ship monthly orders to them.”

It’s a practice that works and is based on close communication with customers. Benson has extremely high customer satisfaction and retention rates.

The concept to delivery model was part of Benson’s strategy from its establishment in 1992 as a provider of direct mail solutions.

“We handle full projects from design to print and fulfilment,” says Benson. “We have always worked with long-term contracts providing an end-to-end service.”

Consolidating printing requirements

By 2013, the company’s activities were in three main areas: print, signage and apparel. Like most companies, growth had been incremental and its press room was operating two conventional sheet-fed presses and a dry toner digital system.

“We saw the need to become more efficient in our print workflow, and we saw the opportunity to address this with the B2 format HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press,” Benson says.

Discussions with HP led to a recommendation to install the HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press, but Benson’s unique approach to going digital favoured the larger press.

“The B2 format of the HP Indigo 10000 offered greater production flexibility, higher throughput and a greater ROI opportunity as well as the chance to have some excess capacity,” Benson explains.

With the ability to print 3,450 full colour sheets per hour on coated and uncoated paper from 45lb text to 150lb cover, the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press gives Benson the ability to provide cost-effective print regardless of the run lengths required.

Benson consulted HP and they concluded that the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press would be viable following Benson’s radical plan: remove all the legacy presses as soon as the HP Indigo 10000 was fully operational and staff trained.

“There was a two-week overlap period,” Benson says. “After that, everyone had to abandon thinking about analogue production.

“As a result, everyone was focused on digital and we delivered positive cash-flow and achieved ROI targets from day one. Had we left the old presses in place, we would still be facing the same issues and the ROI period would have stretched out considerably.”

Benson calls his approach, “ripping off the Band-Aid®” – a short period of pain, then everything was better.

The all-digital workflow with the HP SmartStream digital front end (DFE) accelerated imposition and other prepress processes.

“We previously had to impose each file, but now the HP SmartStream DFE uses templates and hot folders that mean fewer people are involved,” says Courtney Sumners, senior vice president, Benson. “There are fewer touch points with faster file preparation. It’s made a huge difference.

“For example, our Direct2Finish platform, part of the DFE, adds a barcode that will read cutting information generated in the DFE and send it to the Polar cutter. This helps to ensure accurate and optimised cutting, and human intervention is reduced.”

Delivering client objectives

Bob Keator, senior vice president of sales, marketing and client objectives, sees the HP model (compared to offset printing) as a better approach to delivering on client objectives. Keator says, “HP is helping Benson serve client objectives in a far superior way. From cost to produce to speed to market to delivery of unique and cutting edge solutions through HP’s technologies... all of these benefits combine to raise the quality of our clients’ products.”

A digital future. . . with HP

In Benson’s sign-making operation, the move is also to digital with HP. In 2013, the company installed the HP Scitex FB700 Industrial Printer. A hybrid flatbed printer, it meets the diverse demands of Benson’s customers by being able to print on both rigid and flexible substrates.

“Our goal is to have all our production by HP printers and presses by mid-2015,” says Benson. “We’ve had excellent support and believe HP’s investment in technology, R&D, and support programmes deliver the operating platforms and workflow that we want to move forward with.

“By moving all print to HP, we will have consistent colour reproduction on all media from paper, to acrylic and PVC. I look forward to seeing that,” Benson concludes.

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